

Finance & Stewardship?

THE

Left-Hand Power of Christianity;

OR

THE RELATION OF PROPERTY TO THE
SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL.

Διαβάς εἰς Μακεδονίαν, βοήθησον ἡμῖν. ACTS xvi, 9.

BY A. D. FIELD,
OF THE ROCK RIVER CONFERENCE.

Cincinnati:

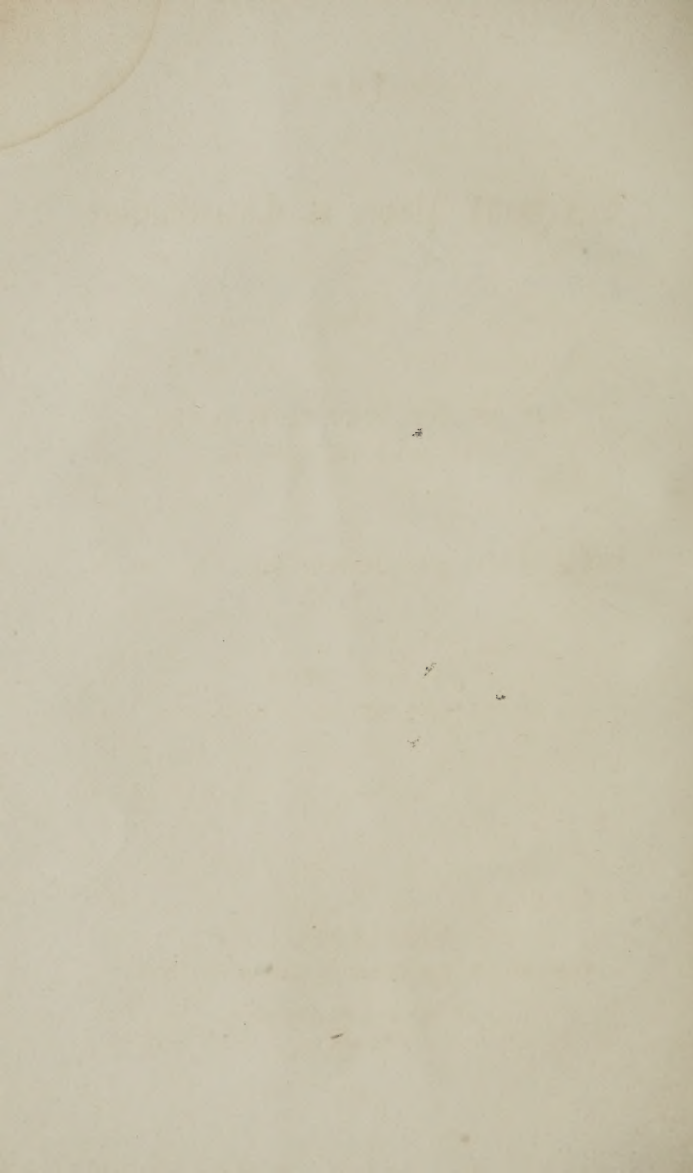
PRINTED AT THE METHODIST BOOK CONCERN.

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E. P. THOMPSON, PRINTER.

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PREFACE.

THE grace of God, the influence of the Holy Spirit, and the preaching of the word, must ever be the chief instrumentalities, or right-hand power of Christianity. But auxiliary to these, and in full companionship therewith, we must place the moneyed "talents" of our men of God. Hence, we shall not be accused of using an unmeaning term when we denominate property the left-hand power of the Gospel.

The work which we here present to the reader, is called forth by the "revival" of the work of benevolence in the Churches at the present time.

For many ages the hearts of men, enthralled by rites and mummeries, did not flow out in streams of beneficence beyond the precincts of their own homes. Luther threw off the thralldom and mummeries of Popery, and led the people to liberty in Christ. Wesley

and his coadjutors developed more fully this liberty, and painted, in lines of living light, the privilege and duty of a new and holy life. Since then the sanctifying power of grace has been diffusing like leaven in the hearts of Christians. Now that salvation which has raised them to newness of life has begun to direct their eyes abroad. There is throughout the length and breadth of the Churches a perceptible decay of selfishness and corresponding growth of benevolence. Men, moved by the Holy Spirit, have gone out to labor in the vineyard, preaching the Gospel to every creature; and now the question of the sustenance of these men of God comes back to us for solution. The spirit of the Christian age is being revolutionized; and we would add a breath, if possible, to the expanding influence which is now opening the hearts of the people. There is a hopeful outgushing of Christian feeling, which this pamphlet is designed to promote. It aims to explain and enforce the duty of Christian beneficence—beneficence large, systematic, and Scriptural.

To this purpose the author dedicates his

effort; and especially to the benevolent members of CLARK-STREET CHURCH, CHICAGO. Upon these brethren, with whom the author was trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and upon this effort to do good, he asks the blessings of the great Head of the Church.

The Left-Hand Power of Christianity.

CHAPTER I.

THE CALLS FOR BENEVOLENCE.

SINCE man has fallen from the image of God, and lost his hold upon heaven; since he has broken the chain of love that bound him to the throne, God has used every means to restore him to his lost estate. A great scheme of redemption has been devised, and ample means of salvation placed in man's reach: while such provisions have been made, God has committed to men—men saved by the power of this salvation—the soul-ennobling privilege of being agents in the work of the Lord, and of bestowing back upon their fellows what they themselves have received from the hands of God.

God, in a word, has made men his agents in the great work of reopening the sin-closed Eden of purity and love on earth, and re-

storing men to God and heaven. Charity, or love—as the word should be—is the great propelling power which moves men in this work. Charity should begin its mission at home; then spread abroad like the blaze of sunlight, till it compasses the whole world.

Let us look for a moment at some of the fields of labor which open before us—fields already white unto the harvest.

1. *Our youth need the culture of the Gospel.*

Many have seemed to think that nothing more is necessary in saving sinners than to let them grow up in any way they please, and then be gathered into the Church at some revival season. This is by no means sufficient. Men are subject to culture, as much so as the plants of a garden. Men's hearts are like the fallow soil. If let alone, weeds and tares will take the ground. If fruits are ever gathered, there must be sowing and culture. The little hands must be clasped in prayer, the mind enlightened, and the heart molded. There must be continual culture that virtues may grow, and evils be exterminated, and religion find a genial seat in the youthful heart. Next to home and a pious mother's prayers, the influences of a Sabbath school are most blessed of God to the good of the young. The Sunday school

is being made a great engine to stay the tide of evil, and spread salvation.

Many are apt to conclude, when multitudes come into the Church at revivals, that they never were the subjects of conviction before—that the Spirit then and there visited them for the first time. Often all the credit is given to the man who is the particular agent in carrying on the revival, when most of the credit—so far as instrumentalities are concerned—will be given by Him who seeth in secret to the efforts of pious mothers and the labors of the Sabbath school teacher. These silent, unobtrusive workings have been preparing the heart, and the revival only develops these impressions into active, living energy by a happy conversion. In your giving, despise not the Sabbath school.

2. *The ministry is to be sustained.*

This is essential to public worship. God has ordained faithful men to proclaim the Gospel, and sends them forth to labor. We sit under their preaching, and rejoice in the blessings of the Gospel. Each one of these ministers must leave his means of living—his trade or what not—and go out where, at his temporal calling, he can not gain a livelihood. He must then lean upon that means of support which the Bible promises to the laborer

in the vineyard: "The laborer is worthy of his hire." Whenever a society requires and demands the labors of a minister, they become responsible for his support, and they should never evade it.

In this matter there is one thing not sufficiently considered. There are on every circuit and near every station destitute parts—home missionary ground. Here the people need the warnings and comforts of the Gospel; but at present they have not the means, or, perhaps, not the disposition, to support a laborer among themselves. Christian men, shall not the minister go there? And does not God call upon you to make up these persons' lack of service?

Though charity begins at home, it should not remain there. It should fly abroad, scattering to earth's remotest bounds the blessings of salvation. Dow, when converted, said he wanted to fly the earth over to tell the people all about the Savior, and then fly away and be at rest! The soul lit up by a heavenly radiance, should uncover and lift up its light to the world.

Every-where there is a call for aid. God is sending Europe to our very doors, that we may present them the Gospel of peace. The Chinaman is coming to California for gold,

where the Christian may meet him with the richer treasure of the Gospel, and preach to him the glad tidings.

Looking out upon other lands, what calls for help come over to us! Macedonian cries come up from the night of heathendom, wailing out supplications for help. Ethiopia is stretching out her hands to us, and may ere-long lift up her hands to God. The islands of the seas are beckoning to us. Every-where the earth resounds with the call for missionary help. It is the call of unsaved men.

I believe God has raised up the Christians of America, and the Methodists especially, to respond to these calls—to be ever ready to rush into these fields as the gates of entrance shall open.

Heretofore the call has not been so great as now, since access could not be had to the people. Now the fields are open and white for the harvest. The revolutions of recent years have given a new cast to the sentiments of the people. They—of Europe especially—are ready to hear *why* America prospers so pre-eminently; and that information they will the more readily listen to when given by American lips. *Our religion* has made a people of us in this our happy FREDONIA, and our religion—the religion of God—they

will respect, and, in some measure, receive. Catholicism has driven the people to skepticism, and with their skepticism they are continually coming over here, to ruin us with their wild notions. Why not send the Gospel over there—to France, to Germany, to Italy—to purify the fountain whence these infidelities flow?

Germany is especially an inviting field. Germany, it may be said, never had a *truly-pure* Gospel—a pure faith. Christianity was not introduced into the Northland till it had become defiled by Roman corruptions. Its progress was only a political change. When Luther arose Germany was in total darkness. Superstitions of every kind prevailed, and it would have been a wonder if in a lifetime Luther should have thrown off *all* the inthrallments that bound him. All praise to Luther! We doubt not God owned his labors on earth and crowned him in heaven; but Luther never saw the light which we behold. And he had no sooner risen than powerful allies joined him, and many of them on political grounds. After Luther was gone to his God the evangelical work was staid. Catholicism, with its mummeries, gave way to a milder and more Bible-like Protestantism; but this Protestantism, being used to further political ends, be-

came paralyzed, and, being hugged to the heart of the state, its light went out, and it sank into a form.

Germany at present contains the greatest minds of the age; and many of these, in emerging from Church mummeries, have leaped into doubt and skepticism. They have run into a rationalistic philosophy little above—if not below—the systems of heathen Plato and Socrates—a philosophy which absorbs and envelops the mind, but does not save the soul. Latterly they have hailed the moonstruck reveries of Parker. Surely they of Germany need—if any one needs—the pure spirit of Jesus to be diffused among them. We may say, there are none all over Germany who feel the power of grace and redeeming love. Shall not this land have the Gospel? Jacoby and his coadjutors have gone over, and already the German shout of joy has come to us across the Atlantic, to cheer our hearts and encourage us in the good work of German missions.

The Methodists have a conference in France, and this is bearing down upon Italy. In that region many Catholic countries are becoming accessible. We may hope that ere long old Rome herself may receive the glad word.

And there is Africa—poor, downtrodden Africa—what shall be done for her? Libe-

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ria, as all know, is a colony of free negroes and emancipated slaves. The Gospel is exerting its power there, making men of the negroes. Liberia stands as a key to all the native tribes, and through it the whole land may be penetrated with the Gospel of peace.

China in the past has been nearly a closed door; but the doings of a few years past have brought about a new state of things.

What shall I say of the Indian—poor Indian of the wood? We have his lands: shall we not at least give him the bread of life—the consolations of the Gospel?

Pity now the poor red man, whose withering fate
You've read long since in many a border tale!
And now send out to him, before it is too late,
Some blessing which shall cheer him ere he fail.

Shall not the yearning heart which missions all the earth,
Bring in these exiled ones unto our brotherhood?
Hold out the hand of fellowship; let love go forth,
And bring him to our hearts, poor Indian of the wood!
Ay to our hearts, poor Indian of the wood!

I have glanced at the opening fields. Instruments are ready to enter them. Almost every Babel tongue of earth may read the word of the Lord in its own dialect.

And men are not wanting. I have no doubt that men might be raised up by hundreds to enter the mission-field. The very spirit of Christianity is a missionary spirit;

and so long as there are Christ-loving Christians at home, there will be those who will be ready to go abroad.

You have heard of the exclamation that is said to have been made by Melville B. Cox, our first missionary to Africa. Before leaving for his work, he went to bid his mother good-by. She—O tender-hearted mother!—fell upon his neck, and wept out, “O, Melville, how can I give you up!” Whereupon he, from the fullness of his heart, exclaimed, “*O Africa, how can I give thee up!*” At another time he is said to have exclaimed, “Though a thousand fall, let not Africa be given up!” That spirit has not yet departed from the Church. Though a Cox has fallen and gone to his reward, many a yearning heart cries out, “O heathen world, how can I give thee up!”

Brethren, sisters, provide the means; *God will provide the men.* The way in which God does this is sometimes marvelous in our eyes. Not many years ago a young German came over to America, and here God converted his soul. After a time he visited his friends in the father-land. It was about the time brother Jacoby went over there. Young Wunderlich began to tell his friends, in a simple manner, what God had done for him.

The simple story of the cross took hold upon their hearts. He appointed meetings for prayer, and in these meetings he would add a few words of exhortation. Soon the people began to gather in to hear his experience, and, ere he was aware of it, he was preaching to them—was proclaiming the good news of salvation.

God will raise up men. If they will not go out willingly, he will thrust them out before they know it. In the days of Mormonism in Illinois, in the county where the Mormons resided, the Methodist societies nearly all ran down. In one place there was a thriving class which was left without preaching. Most of the class were young persons and females. The leader was a timid brother, who took no very active part in religious matters. At last the Mormons came in on the little class, and were about to make proselytes of its members. The hitherto timid leader rallied his little band, and talked to them in an encouraging manner. Soon the Mormons came down on him. He stood up like a man, surprised at his own powers, and defended the little society against the storm. He held meetings and exhorted, till his talents became developed and known. Ever since he has been a useful preacher.

We have, then, access—access to the peopled earth; we have the translated word; we have the men, or the promise of them; what lack we yet? Why, Church of God, the *means*—the *means* to carry on the Christian warfare is what we want. Men have given *themselves*, and hazarded their lives for the promotion of the Gospel. Are there not men lying at ease at home, surrounded with the good things of this life, who are willing to do as much by the gift of goods as others have done by the gift of themselves?

CHAPTER II.

MEN ARE STEWARDS.

I HAVE spoken of the call for benevolence; let us now look at the thing itself.

The hinge upon which the whole system of benevolence hangs is the significant fact, that all we have belongs to God. "Ye are not your own," but are "bought with a price." I regard man as a being let down upon earth amid the treasures of the Lord. Whatsoever any man has around him belongs to God, the giver of all our blessings.

Think, for a moment, of a man being set down in the midst of heaven, and surrounded with all the glories of the upper world—the trees of life; the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God; the golden palaces, the mansions of light, the harp and the crown—and then to think of this man, so highly blessed, refusing to God any of the riches that are there! Think of a man hoarding and clutching the glories of heaven!

Niggardliness would be as much out of place in heaven as love is scarce in hell. And does

not the Christian profess to breathe the spirit of heaven? And shall he then keep back from God's cause the things which already are the Lord's?

It is a very common thing to hear persons in a Methodist class-room express the thought: "All I have and am, I owe under God to Methodism." What is the meaning of all this? Is it mere twaddle? Verily it is not. It may be repeated by some till it has become an unmeaning expression; but, after all, there is very much of truth in the idea. Let us see.

A young man is cast out into the world—perhaps you, reader—he is poor; he has no friends; he is wild and wayward; already he has begun to turn his steps toward the way of sin. Pleasures allure; dissipation comes in. He is hanging fearfully upon that precarious declivity, down whose sloping sides are dissipation, sloth, and crime. Just now the Church takes him up. He strays into a Methodist meeting, or any other meeting, if you please; his heart is touched; he gives his hand to the Church and himself to God. Now he has a home; now he has brethren who encourage him and hold up his hands. For once he feels he is standing in the great arena of time—feels himself a responsible

immortal. He enters into business, and, sustained by religion and religious associations, he prospers in the world. He is now surrounded with blessings; loved and respected by all. Well he may say that he owes all he is, under God, to Methodism. On the one hand, we see him going on as a sinner till he becomes a worthless vagabond; and on the other, through the guidance of his religion, becoming a *man* in the world.

Methodism is but an instrument in the hands of God; and though the prospering Christian may give somewhat of praise to the means, yet, after all, it is God—the power of his religion—which has done it all. God has wrought out his salvation, using Methodism as the instrumentality. To God be all the glory! Shall we not acknowledge our obligations by gifts to the cause of God?

The Christian, whoever he be, stands as a God-made man. The path of divine life has been the way which has led him on to honor and to happiness. In the light of this truth, how much, reader—if thou art the man—how much of all this which has come to thee from the hand of the Lord, how much wilt thou return as a free-will offering to God that gave it?

In the light of the Bible, reader, you are

but a steward. Look at the parable of the talents. 1. The lord owned all. 2. It was committed in trust. 3. To some much; to others less. 4. He demanded the returns, and called to an account. You, brother, have talents. They may be gifts of intellect, or great influence, or wealth. Whatever they are, be diligent to improve them, for the Lord shall call to an account.

You will say, by your own efforts you have gained what you have. But who gave you the mind that has managed, the skill that has wrought? and whose blessings upon all have increased your store? Answer me, thou pensioner upon the bounties of the Lord!

The children, for instance, God gives to a man are yet in the hands of the Lord, and often he recalls his own. And, Christian parent, as you look upon the dear ones gone in advance, to swell the company of the redeemed, there to await your arrival, say, do you wish the loved ones back again? Would you pluck them from before the throne, and bring them back to the earth's cold shades? Do you not rather often rejoice that you have a member of your own family living as a representative in the kingdom of heaven? Your wealth is—or should be—also, thus at the disposal of God; and if it flows out to

blest the world, returning blessings on your head, and adding to your final rewards, would you bring back again gifts that have been dispensed? Would you not rather send out more to swell the rolling river of salvation which flows out to a fallen world?

“See where the servants of the Lord,
A busy multitude appear;
For Jesus day and night employed,
His heritage they toil to clear;
The love of Christ their hearts constrains,
And strengthens their unwearied hands.”

CHAPTER III.

A TRUE VIEW.

To a great extent, conversion is turning the bent of our natures from a bad, death-bound channel into a good and heavenward one. The converted man exhibits much the same propensities as he did when unsaved, only they are developed in a religious way. There is much resemblance—and ought to be more—between our religious doings and our temporal concerns. But in religion we let things go too much at a hap-hazard rate. We are governed too much by whims and impulses. A man's temporalities would soon "go to rack" if he proceeded in temporal matters as he does too often in religious concerns. In worldly affairs a man would do poorly, indeed, if he relied upon chance. What kind of a farmer would he be who would give way to such hopes as these? "I wish some one would sow wheat for me." "I wish some lucky wind would blow grass-seed into my lot, that I might have a meadow." "I wish fruit-trees would grow in my orchard,

that I may have fruit." "I wish an angel would superintend and mature the harvest."

The farmer does not thus. He goes to work and sows his grain; sows his grass-seed; sets out his orchard. He expects to sow if he would reap.

But many religious persons are heard wailing out their slothful moan: "I wish a good preacher would come along, and preach me happy." "I wish there would come a revival, that I might regain my enjoyment." "I do wonder why the Gospel does not spread more in heathen lands." Why, doleful man, if you would be blessed, you must work, and live, and labor for your blessing. Prayers, and wishes, and heart-sighs are well enough in their place; but they alone, according to the just economy of heaven, will not convert the great monster heathendom. God has given this work to you, and will use you and your means to convert the world.

Our benevolent doings are supported in too much of a slipshod manner. Many men pay a preacher or give something to the mission cause whenever they *happen* to have money by them; or, perchance, whenever they *happen* to feel like it! Temporal affairs are not managed in this way. No, no. If you hire a man, you expect to pay him daily wages. If

you borrow money, you make every purpose bend toward paying the interest. So it should be in religious affairs. Who are ye that are just to men, but are forgetful of God?

The preacher should be paid on principle, and all good causes should be supported by system.

The parable of the talents teaches that every man has talents, and that these talents are on interest. Different persons possess different gifts. One has the natural talent of mind; another has this world's goods; both possess these gifts as a trust. The talented man—as a Luther, a Wesley, or a Byron—is amenable to God for the proper improvement of the gifts he possesses. The same law is binding on the man of wealth. At conversion God asks a full surrender of every thing; that is, an acknowledgment that all belongs to him. And when all things are given up—lands, family, fame, self—God gives them all back into the hands of the pardoned man, with this injunction, “Occupy till I come.”

The wealth of the rich man is, then, nothing but a loan. If the interest is not paid, fear thou, God-blessed man, lest your possessions rust and grow moth-eaten in your hands.

The world is ready to censure a minister of the Gospel if he shrinks from the cross, or refuses to go to Africa or the sea islands; but what greater obligation is the minister under, I ask you, to go out than you, man of wealth, are to furnish the means to send him out?

I knew a minister who located, and went into business, and, in lieu of his own services, he paid a preacher's salary to do the work he himself had run away from. This man, I presume, had no right, in the Master's eye, to leave his work; but, having left it, he judged rightly when he thought it becoming him to furnish a substitute.

God required the first-born of the Israelites, but took, in lieu, beasts as offerings; so God has a demand—an equal demand on every man. Of some he asks personal service in the ministry; of others, equivalents in the products of business life.

God needs offerings for Africa. He calls out by his providence, "Who will go?" A Melville Cox answers, "Here am I; send me."

But Melville is poor; he can not furnish means of support; what shall be done? Here we see the true province of the rich man—as a Lunt, a Goodrich, an Evans, or a Waughop—as he comes up offering his money, saying,

“Here, Lord, are thy gifts to me; take them.” In this manner the work becomes reciprocal.

The missionary gives *himself*, and the person of property—as a Marcey, a Royal, a Putnam, or a Creamer—gives his *means* to the work. One by the *living voice* goes out proclaiming the glad tidings; while the other by hallowed gifts is doing the same good work. There is a promise that the sower shall “doubtless return again, bringing his sheaves with him.” The God-loving, faithful minister of the Gospel and the missionary of the cross shall doubtless have a large share in those gathered sheaves; but they shall not be alone in this matter. No. The faithful *giver*, who gives with a *pure* motive, shall bear up to the throne a large portion of sheaves, when the great harvest shall come. One man gives himself to the work; another books and Bibles. Both may look with certainty for a reward.

In London, at one time, there were two poor shoemakers working together. They both found favor with God, and at once were inspired with a missionary spirit. They looked out with yearning heart upon the wicked rabble of the great city. They felt like going about the streets and by-ways of London, scattering the good seed of the kingdom.

But they were poor, and, if they should quit their labor, they would come to want. They adopted this expedient: one went out and spent his time doing good; while the other worked in the shop, supporting them both. In this case we see a new way opened. We can *all* be missionaries, both ministers and laymen. And, surely, the men of business ought to do a good share, seeing they are permitted to stay at home, enjoying every domestic privilege; while the missionary goes out into the storm, facing the foe, meeting the pestilence, leaving home, severing the dearest ties that earth can know.

As to each man's proportion, there can be but one opinion. That opinion is found in 1 Corinthians xvi, 1, 2. If you will be at the trouble to read this passage, you will find that the contributions were general. Paul had given the same order to the Churches of Galatia. It is a moral obligation—Paul gives order. It was to be done systematically; they were to do it on the “first day of the week.”

The measure of their benevolence was “according as the *Lord had prospered them*.” The rich were not to measure their gifts by the gifts of the poor, but according to their prosperity in worldly affairs.

God will accept and *bless* the widow's mite—and the widow—as he does the much of the rich.

I have heard of a rich Methodist, who offered the preacher a *shilling*, remarking that he had made an estimate, and had found that the proportion of quarterage to each member per quarter was one shilling. Here this self-burdened and self-hardened man was measuring himself, who had thousands, with widows and orphans who had nothing. The same man would not let his daughter join the Church, fearing their quarterage would be increased! Thank God, there are comparatively few such in the Church! And thank God once more, that men are on the increase whose hearts are large, and who do in a manner far different from the man just named! We are glad to know that men are awaking to the truth, that they are God's stewards—God's agents in bringing lost Eden to earth again.

But let us look more closely at our general manner of giving.

We find the whole concern of our benevolence is as precarious as the wind. We pay when our hearts are besieged with a force we can not resist. Who, for instance, sits down in his chamber and calculates the amount he

ought to give to the mission cause? If the man is a merchant, he calculates his figures very nicely when thinking of property investments; but who enters into calculations concerning investments in the treasury of the Lord?

How is our missionary money or our preacher's salary raised? We get up meetings; the truths of the case are stated; men feel under the glowing appeals of speakers, and under the fire-impulse they will give their ten, fifteen, or twenty dollars; and then perchance the next day, when ardor is gone, will wonder how they were led to give *so much*.

Other influences than the truth are also at work in these meetings. Men often give to keep up a reputation; give because excitement is running high. Bountiful gives his twenty, and the niggard Clincher will not be beaten by Bountiful, and another "twenty" is procured; not, however, as a gift to the Lord; not because Clincher's heart yearned over dying heathen; not because he feels himself a steward, paying out to God the profits of those amounts God has committed to his care; but it is paid as a sacrifice on ambition's altar—paid as a witness that Clincher could not brook a rival. Heaven knows the mission cause needs all these twenty-dollar

bills; the cause cries out for them; but what is needed is that these gifts—good in themselves—should come as free-will offerings of the heart; come as love-tokens from the creature to the Creator—love-tokens to our perishing brotherhood in heathendom.

The moneyed man, knowing of a prospective railroad to be constructed, sits him down and calculates how much of his means he can spare for investment in railroad stock. Or if a merchant, he calculates the amount of his custom, the amount of each article he will dispose of, and all his orders are made out in reference to his calculations, and with reference to the profits of each article. If he would prosper, all his concerns are managed in a systematic manner.

So should our giving be managed. The Christian feels that investments in the work of the Lord *pay*. He knows he has a continual reward for all he does, and he feels that nothing invested in a worthy cause is lost. And then with this view, he calculates with system his gifts. There are questions to be asked in a review of this matter. Listen to his musings. “How much has God given to me? If a *man* had bestowed upon me the property I possess, how much interest would I expect to pay? And now how much

do I want out in the vineyard of the Lord? The preacher is giving himself; not giving himself by impulse, not preaching when aroused to it, but every day he is employed for God. He counts not his life dear, so he may but win souls. Had he refused to go at his Master's bidding, and gone into business, he might have heaped up the world around him as I have done. He has talents, and might have lived in luxury and ease, as I do now. But he has given the best and greatest of gifts—*himself!* I am permitted to get gain and to enjoy the world. The minister has done no more than his duty, and I am under as much obligation as he; and if the minister has given himself, how much ought I to give to balance the account, and to do as much in my sphere as the minister has done in his?" Such are the soliloquies of a Christ-like mind.

And viewing the matter from such a standpoint, he looks out the objects for investment, and gives according to his means. He feels, for instance, that he ought to have fifty dollars in the mission funds—not fifty dollars now and then, when compelled to it by the importunity of one whose heart is larger than his own; but fifty dollars yearly, and to be paid regularly, whether called upon or not. And so should other causes receive their

annual dividends. Above all, there should be a contingent fund, to be dispensed as free-will offerings when peculiar occasions require.

We must need keep up our missionary meetings, for there always will be a class impelled by impulse, who will give when waked up; but for the mass of our funds we, as a Church, should be enabled to depend on the system *gifts* of our benevolent members.

Let us view this subject in another light. Preachers of the Gospel are of various talents, and the peculiar work of each is a work required to be done. One is a revivalist; another is a good pastoral visitor; while yet another is good at righting up the affairs of the Church; while yet others have no other quality but that of being flaming pulpit orators. It were vain to expect every man to be perfect in all these things.

How are these preachers supported? I fear too much by impulse. A preacher comes among us; he is just the one *we* individually want. Perhaps our tastes are for oratory; he is an orator. We rejoice that, at last, we have a popular preacher, and we support him well. He fares sumptuously every day. But another year there comes along a man of all work. He is a good man, but not eloquent.

He visits the sick; he puts new life into the prayer meetings; he gives interest to the class meetings; he, indeed, is a useful man, but the world and *we* do not happen to see it. *We* want an orator, and pronounce our preacher dull; and because he is not *popular*—that is, run after by the gay crowd—he fares with Lazarus, eating the *crumbs* from rich men's tables. If the preacher does not fill *our* eye, no matter how holy, no matter how useful, no matter how abundant in labors, we pass him by, give him, perhaps, not a dollar, and hope to be better suited another year.

Clark-Streeters, do you remember a Cunningham? And where is your *orator* of the year following?

As I have said, each preacher has his peculiar sphere; and who shall say the *worker* is not as useful as the orator? Each God-called man has capacities that fit him for some portion of the work of the great harvest; each one labors for the Church; each does good among us in the society, though he may not be a special benefit to us individually. Every one of these ministers of God should fare well at our hands. In such a case it might be well to number the persons the preacher must depend upon for a support; then compare your means with the

means of others, and decide how much you ought to pay yearly—yes, yearly: not so much to the popular preacher, and none to the worker, but a regular amount yearly to the man who serves you in the bonds of the Gospel. You will find, for instance, that five or ten dollars a member will meet your preacher's claim; then you will remember the widows that have but mites to give, and the children who may give but twenty-five cents, and the number who are worth only mills where you are worth *dollars*. Then, in this view of the case, make your calculations, and give as God hath prospered you, never measuring yourself by your poorer brethren.

However much we, as Americans, may boast over the English, and turn Know-Nothings, we must yield the palm to them in the matter of systematic benevolence. The English—especially the Wesleyans—are far ahead of us in their acts of beneficence. Poor as they are, or rich as they may be, they are always at their post on quarterage day.

In our own Fredonia many a traveling preacher will finish his year with half a support, while on English circuits this is seldom the case. The Wesleyan preacher as much expects to receive his yearly allowance as any laborer in our land expects his monthly pay.

Not so with our itinerants: they live in hope and fear, and often go into the pulpit—as I have done—with hearts burdened with sorrow on account of straitened circumstances. Whence comes this difference? It is found in the fact, that each Wesleyan expects to pay his “quarterage” as much as he expects to pay his rent. Before each quarterly meeting tickets are distributed to each member of every class, and every person expects to pay something quarterly as much as he expects to get his ticket. This is not done from compulsion; but the people seem to have a *moral sense* of duty so deep that they always come up to the mark. And if there happens to be a poor member in the class that can not pay his portion, his brethren who have means come to his aid, and before he knows it his hand is filled with shillings for quarterage.

I consider the support of the Gospel ministry to be one of the important causes of Christian benevolence; and, as Methodists, we need in many places a reform in this matter.

Does not the system of pew-renting take from members too much responsibility in matters of giving? or, at least, where pews are rented, should there not be a regular system of gifts to the missionary cause, that the

members may be trained up in the way of contributing.

I was a member for four years at one time of a city Church, where there was never a request for money, except in a popular way in public meetings. That same Church has since adopted a system of class collections for the mission cause; and where formerly they collected from the Church but twenty or thirty dollars, now the Church reports from five to six hundred dollars yearly: 1854 the amount raised was six hundred and sixty dollars; in 1855 they reported one thousand dollars. Well done for Clark-Street!

What we need is a system of training upon this subject. Upon stewards and class-leaders falls a heavy responsibility. Is it not the duty of the class-leader to see that his members abound in good works as well as in grace? Indeed, the first classes were instituted to raise means for the furtherance of the cause of God. The class-leader uses every means that his members may grow in grace and in the knowledge of God. This is as it should be; but should he not go forth and strive to train up those committed to his charge in Christian liberality?

A reform in our whole system of giving should be brought about. This reform should

commence in the Sunday school, where a person should be appointed to receive monthly the contributions of pennies from the little ones for the missionary cause. It should go into the family, where the father should insist—as a friend of mine does—that every one of his children should pay something quarterly for the support of the preacher. It should go into the class-room, where the leader, or a person appointed, should receive monthly contributions to aid in any work most needed. Thus commencing as a rill in the classes of the Sunday school, it will become a stream, steady and sure, among the classes of the *Church*. Such a Church, working in the Sabbath school and class meetings, would be a permanent pillar of support for the mission cause.

The Church I mentioned above raised, twelve years ago, two hundred dollars missionary money in her Sabbath school, while the Church proper raised but twenty or thirty. Little Mary C.—now Mrs. B.—as missionary collector, raised twenty-seven dollars of this two hundred in one month. Now those Sabbath school children are the active members of the Church, and the Church raises her thousand dollars a year. So it must be every-where, if this wheel be but set in mo-

tion. The children will start it, and, like an avalanche, the benevolence of the Church will gather power as it progresses toward the desired goal.

CHAPTER IV.

EXAMPLES OF BENEVOLENCE.

HOPING the attention of the reader is called to the subject, I will cite some examples of giving that may serve him as patterns, by which to mold his own plan of benevolence. Every man can not equal the higher examples given; but all can do in small things what others have done in greater.

John Wesley, the father of Methodism, not only gave himself to the work, but all his income. "He remarked in early life that he had known but four men who had not declined in religion by becoming wealthy. Later in life he corrected the remark, and made no exception. When his own income was one hundred and forty-five dollars a year, he gave away ten dollars of it. When it was three hundred dollars, he still confined his expenses to one hundred and thirty-five dollars, and gave away the rest; and so when he received six hundred dollars, he still lived on his old allowance. Besides giving himself wholly to the public good, and laboring as

devotedly as any other man of modern times for the moral welfare of the poor, he gave away, it is computed, more than a hundred thousand dollars, the proceeds of his publications. The last entry in his private journal runs thus: 'For upward of eighty-six years I have kept my accounts exactly; I will not attempt it any longer, being satisfied with the conviction that I save all I can and give all I can—that is, all I have.' "

Here is the plan of N. R. Cobb, a Baptist merchant of Boston:

"By the grace of God, I will never be worth more than fifty thousand dollars. By the grace of God, I will give one-fourth of the profits of my business to charitable and religious uses. If ever I am worth twenty thousand dollars, I will give one-half of my net profits; and if ever I am worth thirty thousand dollars, I will give three-fourths; and the whole after fifty thousand dollars. So help me God, or give to a more faithful steward, and set me aside."

To this covenant Mr. Cobb faithfully adhered till his death. At one time, finding that his property had increased beyond fifty thousand dollars, he at once devoted the surplus—seven thousand, five hundred dollars—to a good cause. The secret spring of motive

with him was religious principle. It was the fruit of the Holy Spirit. He did not wait, as some do, till he had become rich before he began to give; but while he was comparatively poor and newly established in business, he gave one-fourth of his proceeds. He made good use of what he had, and God added abundantly to his store. Above all, he resolved to have the *disposal of his own alms*—not leaving hoarded wealth for administrators *to be charitable with!*

I once knew a poor apprentice boy, who received but forty dollars a year, and gave six per cent. of this forty to religious purposes: he did not give of his profits, but of his income.

Some years ago Mr. Samuel Goodell, of Vermont, became an example of giving. When the Board of Missions began its operations, Mr. Goodell did not wait for an agent to visit him, but sent a message more than fifty miles to a member of the Board, saying that he wished to subscribe five hundred dollars for immediate use, and one thousand for a permanent fund. He paid a part of the subscription down, and interest on the remainder till it was all paid.

Dr. Watts, the sweet psalmist, gave away one-fifth of his income. Baxter, Doddridge,

Dr. Hammond, and Chief Justice Hale one-tenth.

“An anonymous writer says of himself, that he commenced business and prosecuted it in the usual way, till he lost nine hundred dollars, which was all he was worth, and found himself eleven hundred dollars in debt. Being led by his trials, through God’s grace, to Christ, he, at the age of forty, determined to take God’s word as his guide in business, and consecrated his earnings to the Lord. The first year he gave twelve dollars. For eighteen years the amount was increased twenty-five per cent., and the last year he gave eight hundred and fifty dollars; and he says he did it easier than he paid the twelve dollars. Besides—though with nothing but his hands to depend on when he began his course—he paid the whole debt of eleven hundred dollars with interest, though it took him nine years to do it.”

Another says of himself, “I have for many years adopted the rule of setting aside a portion of my income as the ‘Lord hath prospered me.’ I have felt that more than a tenth was my duty, and I can testify to the blessed influence of the system.”

Another distinguished giver says: “I further determined, that if at any time my net

profits—that is, profits from which clerk hire and store expenses had been deducted—should exceed five hundred dollars in a month, I would give twelve and a half per cent. of it; if over seven hundred, fifteen per cent.; if over nine hundred, seventeen and a half per cent.; if over eleven hundred, twenty per cent.; if over thirteen hundred, twenty-two and a half per cent.; thus increasing the proportion of the whole as God should prosper, till at fifteen hundred I should give twenty-five per cent., or three hundred and fifty dollars per month. As a capital was of the utmost importance to my success in business, I decided not to increase the foregoing scale till I had acquired a certain capital, after which I would give a quarter of all net profits, great or small; and on the acquisition of another certain amount of capital, I decided to give half; and after acquiring what I considered would be a full sufficiency of capital, then to give the whole of my net profits. It is now several years since I adopted this plan, and under it I have acquired a handsome capital, and have been prospered beyond my most sanguine expectations. Although constantly giving, I have never yet touched the bottom of my fund, and have been repeatedly surprised to find what large drafts

it could bear. This system has been of great advantage to me, enabling me to feel that my life is directly employed for God. It has afforded me happiness in enabling me to apportion out the Lord's money, and has enlisted my mind more in the progress of Christ's cause, thus associating the common labors of life with the service of the Savior."

I might go on thus enumerating these cases, but think you, reader, have examples enough. But if you wish to know the highest benefactions of any living man, you will find it in the following from an English letter-writer. Besides what is here said to be given, Mr. Wilkes gives much toward other objects, and that, too, by thousands. In 1853 he gave five thousand dollars toward a fund for paying Church debts. But to the extract: "One of the most wonderful instances of Christian liberality occurred last week—November, 1853—in the town of Wolverhampton, Staffordshire, England. Mr. Samuel Wilkes, a resident of that town, and a member of the Wesleyan body there, in the year 1852 promised five dollars a day to the Wesleyan Missionary Society, which he promptly and faithfully paid. Receiving manifest tokens of divine approval in his secular affairs, he promised for the present year—1853—thirty-five

dollars a day; and last week, at the Public Missionary meeting at Wolverhampton, he engaged to give, should God spare his life, the marvelous sum of two hundred and fifty dollars a day for the year 1854."

I have a friend whose rule is to contribute to good objects a certain per cent. of his yearly income; and as his business is job-work, and of an irregular nature, when he goes into any undertaking he promises the Lord a portion of the profits. By so doing he often finds a large quantity of the Lord's money in his hands to be disposed of, and he says his greatest happiness consists in dispensing these funds of the Lord which are in his hands from time to time.

CHAPTER V.

MOTIVES TO BENEVOLENCE.

IN the Scriptures we are warned against the corrupting influence of riches. It is the wrong use made of money that does the mischief. Hoarded wealth, or wealth one may have set his heart upon, will prove an accursed snare. But property *may* be used to advance our eternal interests; and this would be the case could we feel that we are stewards. A ship would do poor work at sailing without the buoyant waters. They support the vessel as she sails on her way. But let the vessel spring a leak, and the same element that bore her up and onward will rush in and sink her to the bottom of the sea. So may wealth be a means of usefulness and a means of enhancing one's happiness here and in heaven. The beggar can not be as useful as the man of property. But let the property, or, rather, the love of it, once come in upon the soul, and it will drown men in perdition.

In looking at the question of benevolence,

much depends upon the point of view from which we look upon it. You may place this pamphlet, small as it is, before your eyes, and shut out the great sun from your sight. And often thus does earth—this meager earth—dim the light of glory, and shut out man's true relation and his great destiny from his eyes. A *toy* of earth often allures men from all that is joyous and glorious. If one could get a clear view of heaven, the domes, and palaces, and stone structures of this world would sink into nothing by the comparison.

Go with me, reader, to the hour of your conversion. You remember your penitent groans and your woes. In that dark hour you would have given all you possessed for one ray of hope. It was total darkness around you; and seeing the littleness of earth, in that hour you promised that all should be the Lord's; and when at last God spoke peace to your soul, and the clouds were gone, you exclaimed, "Give me Jesus, and you may have all the world: give me Jesus!" Where now are those earth-renouncing vows, that all-absorbing choice of Christ as your portion? Are they yet remembered?

Go again to the dying bed of the sinner. He, poor soul, may have treasures upon earth, but in the future all is darkness and gloom.

The fitful mists of the lower world loom up before him. It is, indeed, a mournful hour! What would he not give to stand in your place among the living? It is now too late to indulge these hopes; he is dying, and "quite unfurnished for the world to come." Ah! the death-time of man is an honest hour. Then the trembling soul views things in their true light!

I knew of a young lady who came to her dying bed unprepared to die. She began to pray, but the infidel doctor told her all was well. Said she in answer, "Doctor, you are *well*, and it will do for you to talk so; but I am dying, and must tell the truth." Yes, death's time is an honest hour, and the conceptions of the meagerness of earth and the glories of heaven which open upon the soul are realities. Then man wakes to the true state of affairs. Go, Christian, and save sinners from death-beds so drear and hopeless.

Now ascend, and stand upon the battlements of heaven, and look out upon the redeemed as they raise their voices in melodious songs in the heavenly world. And as you listen, imagine there is one in that company raised to heaven, and crowned with life by your instrumentality! What a thrill of joy it will give you! He who now stands glo-

rified before you was once a sinner exposed to the wrath to come; some word from your lips, or some missionary sent abroad on the wings of your contributions, or some book or Bible from your hands, reached his case, and he is saved—saved because you did your duty! He is a brand plucked from the burning by your hand. And remember now that immortal spirit is to live on and on, long after the ashes of this world have vanished away—still swelling the note of grateful praise among the elders around the throne. All this may be a joyous reality, and not a brain fancy. Who, then, will hoard or foolishly squander earthly treasure, when such an eternity of joy may be given to one's self and to others by a proper use of what God has given?

There is a fanciful story that will illustrate this point. In Ireland many poor boys get an education as charity scholars. A certain teacher had, from time to time, these in his school, till he had educated seven of them. Then he began to grow penurious, and would take no more poor scholars. Whereupon he had a saddening dream. He died and went to the other world; but there found himself away down, with a high precipice between him and heaven. He strove to surmount this difficulty,

but in vain. At last the seven charity scholars come along, and said that by their aid he was to climb to heaven. They then stood upon each other's shoulders, one above another, and the poor schoolmaster essayed to climb the hight up this human ladder. But, on arriving at the top, he found there were not persons enough to carry him to the top. In this dilemma one told him he must go back to earth, and educate more of these charity scholars, for they should be his means of escaping from the pit into heaven.

I would not teach the idea of salvation by works, but in this fancy there is an idea that may penetrate the soul, and illustrating the relation of duty and destiny.

Pause once more, and consider what God has done for you. He has surrounded you with blessings; his loving-kindness is continual, free, and new. Above all, look at the gift of the great Redeemer. For you he stretched his arms upon the cross; for you he bled and died; for you he intercedes to-day.

“With pitying eyes the Prince of Peace
Beheld our helpless grief;
He saw, and, O, amazing love!
He flew to our relief.”

Can you not make some return? If Jesus could stoop down from heaven to earth, and

endure the cross for you, will you not aid in publishing the glad tidings to the world?

Many have erred by doing their benevolent acts upon a dying bed, or through administrators after death, instead of appropriating their means wisely while living: just as if they would fling this, their gold, which they can no longer use, as dust to blind the eyes of the Almighty.

A man has a right to retain as much property as will carry on his business and keep him comfortably; but men ought to have more to say concerning the disposal of their means. They ought to enjoy the privilege of disposing of their property while living, in a manner suited to their own Christian tastes, and not leave it at death for others to handle. One will feel he is not living in vain who has means out in the field doing good. A benevolence exhibited in a will is well enough for the cause it helps; but it seems as if the man has clung to his gold as long as possible, yielding it up only in the death-groans. He is robbed of the pleasure of giving and of seeing the good effects of his gifts.

Again: how often is the property that ought to have been used in spreading good causes, left to be squandered by godless chil-

dren! Reader, I would not add a word against *your* children; but it is too often the case that hard-earned gains are turned out to curse the world when the gainer is gone away. Who can tell whom your sons or your daughters may marry?

I do remember a good man who had an only, well-loved daughter. The old man continued to work away at his bench through cold weather and hot weather, to gain means to educate his Mary and make her comfortable in the world. He could hardly spare a cent for his own comfort or for a good cause. All his hopes, his labors were for Mary. Well, Mary married, and the good man and his wife went to their long home, and in one short year all the hard-earned moneys were squandered and gone! How much better had the father scattered some of this wealth on angels' wings, to be borne out as blessings to the world! I might cite such instances as this till your patience would tire. Such cases are innumerable; and who, good reader, can say it will not be so with your children and wealth when you are gone?

But above all motives—unless we except love to God and man—is the prospect of *reward*—the smiles of God and joys of heaven. It is a question somewhat difficult to answer,

how far our good works will profit us in the world to come; but we are assured there is a reward for well doing. The parable of the talents teaches this. The *extent* of the *future glory* of those to whom talents are given seems to depend on the improvement of the talents. We are also exhorted to lay up treasures in heaven; and various passages of Scripture combine to prove that the man who does good—even the giving of a cup of cold water—shall receive a reward. What the nature of this reward will be we may not know fully. It is enough to know that our joy will be increased by the good we may do here. It is said of the sower that he shall return bringing his sheaves with him; and the thought that souls have been saved through our instrumentality will be a joy forever. My idea of the matter is this: we are saved from the wrath to come, saved from sin and hell, and get to heaven by faith in the merits of Christ, but by our good deeds we may add to our future glory. Through Christ we receive a golden crown; but we may add stars to that crown—stars which will be souls saved by our efforts. The faint-souled, meager Christian or the dying penitent sinner may get to heaven, and wear a crown, and he himself be a dim light in the kingdom; while the useful

Christian shall wear a crown all gemmed with stars, and he himself be a burning seraph around the throne.

We may get a good idea from the fable of the "Desert Island." A man was cast ashore upon an island, and was at once made king of the country. After a time he inquired of his prime minister concerning the affairs around him. The minister informed him that every year a person had been cast upon their shores as he had been, and each person had reigned as their king for one year. At the year's end all these kings had been transported to a desert island, where they had perished.

"And is there no help for this?" inquired the king.

"Yes," answered the minister; "all the people and wealth of this island are now at your disposal. You can use them in fitting you a home in the island for your reception when your year with us is at an end."

Upon this suggestion the king acted. He caused the desert island to be planted with all manner of fruit-trees, and all things were prepared for his comfort. When his year ended he had a place of resort far better than his kingdom.

This king is man. He comes into the

world, and means—talents and the grace of God, all the wealth of heaven—are at his disposal. By these he may secure an abiding and glorious home when the scenes of time with him are over. He may squander his time, be a spendthrift of his means, and go from earth to the desert of hell! Or he may lay up treasure in heaven, that shall await him when all these scenes of earth are past.

May such a lot be yours and mine, dear reader! And when all the varying scenes of time have faded from the view; when writing, giving, preaching, laboring, are past, may you and I meet in the kingdom of heaven, bringing a plentiful burden of sheaves thither from the harvest-field of earth! May we rank among the most successful reapers; and when the angels, with joy, shall shout the harvest-home, may we appear laden with the treasure of souls gathered for the great garner above!

The sum of the matter is this: Earth is the *acting time*; heaven the place of reward; and the *chief* business of life is to lay up treasures in heaven and to enter the strait gate that leadeth to the kingdom. If a man has gifts as a ready writer, and these gifts swell up the tide of evil, the results will follow men to the very gates of hell. If any

man shall write as a man of genius, and scale the summit of fame, he shall fall like an autumn leaf into the grave, and not one whisper of fame's rapt sound shall ever follow him into the other world. But if that pen be employed to build up the kingdom of God, it shall be rewarded with immortality and eternal life.

In like manner the treasures of man, if suffered to further ungodly ends, shall come up in evil results in eternity like specters, and frown upon and witness against their possessor throughout everlasting ages. But if earth's treasures are made to serve as pinions for the angels of mercy and grace, who fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel, happy will he be in the day of final retribution who has cast his abundance into the treasury of the Lord.

As the young man toils on strong-hearted to procure means for the years when age shall come upon him; as the husbandman, in his commencement, plants his orchards that he may eat of the fruits in years to come; so should men, in the short years of time, lay all under contribution, and bend every nerve to prepare for the years of *eternity*. Fearful, O fearful the departure of that man who is unfurnished for the world to come! As a

luminous contrast, what more glorious sight this side of heaven than is seen in the chamber where the good man meets his fate! He looks back—that faithful dying man does—on the years devoted to the service of God with soul-inspiring recollections. All his hopes, and aspirations, and *actions* have been ruled into the subservience of religion under a lively sense of his accountability. Hence the coming account must be joyful.

Steward of the manifold blessings of God, wake to your responsibility and the greatness of your charge. Thy time is short; the tide of time is rolling thee on to a shoreless eternity; and in such an hour as ye look not for it—perchance in the silent night-watches, when none but angels listen—thou shalt glide into the world of changeless destiny. Happy if, when earth recedes and eternity breaks on your vision, thou shalt hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord!”

THE END.

